

THE ARMISTICE
AND OTHER POEMS

AMY REDPATH RODDICK

Roddick, Amy (Redpath)
The armistice



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THE ARMISTICE

And Other Poems

BY

AMY REDPATH RODDICK

Author of "The Flag and Other Poems"

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THE ARMISTICE.

Shrill and loud the piercing note,
Blasted from the syren's throat,
Shouting to the answ'ring bells
To confirm the news it tells;
And the deep-toned bells vibrate
With the message they relate:
"Victory! Victory!"

From their work the people stream,
Feeling all must be a dream;
But, " 'Tis true!" roll out the bells,
"What the shrieking whistle tells."
So the banners float on high
And the people laugh and cry:
"Victory! Victory!"

In their eyes are welling tears
Held in check these four long years.
Let emotion freely play
Its release on this great day!

THE ARMISTICE

Forced control and aching dread
Melt away in tears thus shed,
Victory! Victory!

Citizens and soldiers run
In a string together spun,
Boys are clanging pots and pans;
Labourers and artizans,
Clerks and merchants rush along,
Elbowing the motley throng,
Victory! Victory!

Draped in flags, strange figures come,
Pirouetting, frolicsome,
Tall coned caps upon their heads
Spell the fool and nonsense spreads,
Children immitate and prance,
Blowing trumpets while they dance,
Victory! Victory!

Tooting motors seek to pass
Through the swaying human mass,

THE ARMISTICE

Like the buildings they are gay
With the bunting's proud display;
Swirling papers fill the air,
Noise and colour everywhere,
Victory! Victory!

Ah there may be mournful hearts
And this scene to them imparts
Hollow mirth or keen distress—
Here and there in sable dress
Women strive to hide their grief,
Bravely laugh without relief,
Victory! Too late, too late!

Gentle Peace! bring healing now,
Lightly touch each fevered brow,
Kiss the mourners till they smile,
Soften hearts that may revile,
Sow pure thoughts upon this earth,
Nurse them into godly birth.
Peace! for Thee, our Victory!

A RED CROSS MESSAGE.

The beauty of the thing* amazed and startled
him—

Amid those rows of palms, so shadowy and
dim,

There glowed a live-oak tree, that sparkled
through the night,

And over it a star of purity and light.

He gazed, and as he gazed, he felt a sickening
pain,

Then quickly turned aside and muttered words
profane,

For Christmas Eve, with joy and tree and
shining star,

Agreed but ill with him, who bore sin's ugly
scar.

* A Community Christmas Tree in the square of a
Southern town at the time of the annual Red Cross Drive.

A RED CROSS MESSAGE

Now as he moved away, one softly touched his
arm,
So furtively he looked and showed his weak
alarm;
He tried to force a smile—his fear then passed
to her,
Although she stood her ground, this Red
Cross Messenger.

“You do not wear our badge, you’ll buy perhaps from me?”

She held the button high that he might clearly
see.

Then slowly he drew forth a fifty dollar bill
And offered it to her, as though against his
will.

“It’s all I have,” he said, “it’s stolen money
too!

Will fifty stolen dollars buy that cross from
you?”

She took the proffered bill, then gravely shook
her head

And opened up a bag of neatly crocheted
thread.

A RED CROSS MESSAGE

“Your fifty stolen dollars are, I fear, too few;
But this is Christmas Eve! So one I’ll add
for you.”

Most solemnly she pinned the badge upon his
breast,

“Who wears the scarlet cross must follow its
behest.”

He understood the words and humbly bent his
head;

When he at length looked up, the Red Cross
girl had fled;

But joy was in his heart, his chance had come
again

For this was Christmas Eve—her deed was not
in vain!

THERE ARE GREEN PALMS
AFAR.

Oh Sorrow! you and I have wandered
Through arid wastes of time;
Both youth and beauty I have squandered
While in this torrid clime.
Mine eyes are dull from heavy weeping,
Though now they weep no more;
A death-like chill is o'er me creeping,
My throat is parched and sore.
My hands and feet are torn and mangled
By cruel cactus spikes;
My hair falls loose, with dust entangled;
The hot sun fiercely strikes!
My heart at times is beating wildly,
And then a sinking pain——
But now a breeze is blowing mildly,
There comes a soothing rain.
I stretch my arms and breathe new vigour,
And see one misty star:

THERE ARE GREEN PALMS AFAR

And lo! the world is growing bigger,
 There are green palms afar,
And fruitful laurel too and myrtle,
 And brooks that lead to seas,
While lending strength to make earth fertile
 With flowers and shrubs and trees.
My steps have ceased to shift and falter,
 A purpose beckons me!
In prayer I kneel at duty's altar,
 Then rise, refreshed and free!

WHEN ONE'S BIRTHDAY COMES IN MAY!

How can one be sad?

When one's birthday comes in May,
In the spring-time, in the flower-time,
In the gladsome month of May,
When the fairies hold high revels
And young Eros seeks his prey
With a quiverful of arrows
That are gold in May.

Leaden arrows are for autumn

When flowers fruit and then decay,
Arrows blunted with earth's sorrows,
Dulled with passions' gruesome sway,
From whose wounds there grows aversion
Never known in May.

Golden arrows are for spring-time,
Flashing as in wanton play,

WHEN ONE'S BIRTHDAY COMES IN MAY

Sharply pricking hearts athrobbing
With the life, new-born in May,
Arrows tipped with lovers' potions,
Quickened with expectant play
Of the riper joys of summer
Coming after May.

But the flowers, however perfect,
Opened wide on summer day,
Fail to spread the same elation
As the buds, upspringing, gay,
Redolent with hopes and wonders,
That unfold in May.

Flowers, that Aphrodite's footsteps
Leave to trace her airy way,
Filching beauty from the goddess
While with mortals she doth stray,
Pink from cheeks ablush with laughter,
Violet that eyes purvey,
Pearly tints from teeth are stolen
By the flowers in May.

WHEN ONE'S BIRTHDAY COMES IN MAY

If with dew a babe be sprinkled
On a birthday that's in May,
Never will the heart grow older
Though the hair be streaked with grey,
Years revolving leave deep furrows,
But the heart is May!

Raise the pole and twist the ribbons,
Dance around in bright array,
Choose the King and Queen of May-games,
Crowned with wreathes of hawthorn-
spray,
Laugh and sing for nature with you
Celebrates her birth to-day,
Flowers and sunshine, youth and love-time!
All are born in May!

How did I forget
The dog-tooth violet,
The marsh-grown marigolds,

WHEN ONE'S BIRTHDAY COMES IN MAY

The daffodil that holds
A poet's thoughts of glee
And tosses them to me,
The primrose nestling low,
Where English cowslips grow,
The yellow colouring
That glimmers in the spring?

Yellow, steeped with Aphrodite's
Ringlets, loosely bound in May,
Pale, when Artemis goes roving,
Brightening with Apollo's ray.
Yellow, pink, pure white, mauve-purple
Are the flowers of May!

Only yellow have we chosen
For our garden-bed's display,
Saffron like Athena's peplus,
Woven with the scenes of fray;
As the Goddess won the battle,
Women gain new birth to-day!
Dead the Giants, Sloth and Custom,
Wisdom grows this May!

BIRTHDAY GIFTS.

Oh silent Dead! now share with me
The morning of another year;
As in the past bring gifts for me,
So wipe away the falling tear!

The many things you gave me once
I treasure for the thought that planned;
Now only thoughts I ask from you,
Such thoughts as I can understand;

To give yourselves, just as you were,
In tender love on my fête-day,
To smile as you were wont to smile
When hidden presents you'd display,

To give me, each, the birthday kiss
Now softly on my up-turned brow,
To wish me every happiness
Whilst I repeat that oft-made vow

BIRTHDAY GIFTS

That I will try to live this year
As you would wish that I should live,
Thus bring to fruit your loving thoughts—
My present that to you I give!

HIS LAST BIRTHDAY.

Step lightly, love, step lightly,
My thoughts are far away;
In silence have they drifted,
Where once with soul uplifted,
I lay beneath the flowering May,
It bloomed that year on my birthday.

I'm resting on the soft young grass
Where violets still linger,
Their daintiness I finger,
While watching feathered clouds that
pass—
And now I see but clouds, alas!

The flowers I smell are bound with wire
And wound in wreaths and crosses,
Whose short-lived beauty glosses
The sombreness of death's attire
And breathes the love such gifts inspire.

HIS LAST BIRTHDAY

To show man's love these flowers must fade;
But living flowers above me
Are whispering they love me,
No sign of death is here displayed;
For spring has kissed each gleaming blade

That shimmers in the morning sun,
Has filled me with such pleasure
In overflowing measure,
I feel myself and nature one,
Myself, the flowers—and then the sun!

I lie in joyous ecstasy
And watch the flowers above me
That whisper how they love me,
As through the branches I can see
The blue of clear eternity
That's softly,—softly,—calling me—

“Oh! Mother, Mother,” cried the child,
“Grandad looks no longer old;
But his hands have grown so cold, so cold.”

THE DAY THE 42nd RETURNED.

She lay within her darkened room;
No ray of light must pierce the gloom
Where all was silent as the tomb
 In which he lay;

But she could weep and clench her hands
And so reply to grief's demands;
She could feel its burning brands,
 Its fierce dismay.

Great heaving sobs now shook her frame
And thus she wept till some one came,
Whose soothing touch helped quell the flame
 Of passion's play.

"Please Mother, let us go and see
The men who've fought for you and me,
And Daddy said for liberty
 They went away!"

THE DAY THE 42nd RETURNED

She dried her eyes and changed her dress
In answer to his eagerness.
No one should pity her distress—
No sign betray!

They heard the whistles' cheering blast
And sought the crowds now thickly massed
To see the Highlanders who passed,
With welcome gay.

The sun was shining on these men!—
Her man would never come again,
He was beyond all earthly ken,
So far away.

The child appeared to understand,
With all his might he pressed her hand,
She felt his gentle reprimand,
His kindly sway.

The boy she loved was by her side,
Her husband's love had never died,
The love he bore her as his bride
Was hers to-day!

THE DAY THE 42nd RETURNED

And so the crowds were right to cheer
The splendid men now marching here,
No one forgot the men—still—there,
Not far away!

WHEN EACH IS STRUNG
WHERE IT BELONGS!

I lay awake and many songs,
Now sad, now sweet,
All incomplete,
Came drifting from the shades of night;
Some dwelt on sin and cruel wrongs,
Some breathed pure love and sheer delight;
But all were fleet,
All incomplete!

I fell asleep and from those songs
A meaning grew,
That formed the clue
Of life and death, of good and ill;
The knowledge which to God belongs
Seemed mine—I understood His will!
The wonder grew!
Eternal! True!

WHEN EACH IS STRUNG WHERE IT BELONGS

At last I woke and many songs,
Now sad, now sweet,
All incomplete,
Came flitting with the morning light.
Alas! the thread that strung those songs
Had vanished from my waking sight;
But all's complete
And ever sweet,
When each is strung where it belongs.

TO THE TWANG OF HIS GUITAR.

In the soft Hawaiian language,
 To the twang of his guitar,
Low he sobs his droning anguish
 For the Love he's left afar;

For a distant Island City
 Where the warm waves roll and break,
Rise and swell and fall like music;
 Where one dreams while still awake.

He can see her, as she stood there,
 Palpitating from the dance,
Flushed and burning with love's fever,
 Paling at his answ'ring glance.

Loose her robe of coloured cotton,
 Garlanded with leaf and flower;
Lithe and willowy her figure
 Wielding youth's persuasive power.

TO THE TWANG OF HIS GUITAR

But he left her, as she stood there,
For a cold and friendless shore.—
Now he sobs his moaning anguish
For the Love he'll see no more.

THEY SAY: "HE'S DEAD!"

The heavy fragrance from the orange bloom
Is wafted through the windows of my room,
And mingles with the perfume of the rose,
That only round my heart now twines and
grows.

Some crumpled leaves, long treasured in a
note,
Are faded as the ink with which he wrote:
"The sweetness of this rose must all reveal,
The tender hopes and fears that lovers feel!"

They say: "he's dead" — like these poor
crumpled leaves —
But hopes and fears the living rose still
weaves,
The rose that grows and twines around my
heart,
While wedded joys the orange blooms impart!

WHERE WILLOWS INTERTWINE.

I've clothed my thoughts in written words
And tuned them for the lyre,
And borrowed trills from mating birds
To sing my soul's desire.

Such wealth of harmony and charm
I conjure all in vain,
For not one jot can I disarm
My cruel Love's disdain;

She treats me as a singing bird
That chirrups at her call,
And if with tears my eyes are blurred
She answers not at all;

But turns to suitors who can woo
With gifts of moneyed worth,
As note of love one purring coo
Of pride in landed birth.

WHERE WILLOWS ENTERTWINE

I hate those suitors for their pride,
I hate their vain conceit!
My shabby clothes I wish to hide.
(I might at least be neat!)

But I'll not try to ape those fools,
My Love's no Love of mine!
I'll seek for peace by shady pools
Where willows intertwine;

And there I'll lie upon the moss,
In sweetest solitude,
And dream away my aching loss,—
My Love's ingratitude!

FANCIES.

The fairies of my early years
Are hov'ring round me still,
Invisible elf'n engineers
That ply their magic skill,
Transforming things one sees and hears
By effort of their will.

They curve the angles of my life
And smooth its pebbled way,
And turn the bitterness of strife
To honied roundelay,
They soften sounds of drum and fife,
The martial notes of fray,

Until I catch the melting strains
That warble through the flute,
The harmonies and odd refrains
That suit the stringèd lute,

FANCIES

The spirit voice that faints and wanes
When facts alone bear fruit.

The music of the dulcimer
Re-echoes from the past,
When prophet and astrologer
Saw visions that still last,
Of wonders, spun like gossamer,
To veil fair truth's forecast.

For truth thrives best in mystery
Where faith upholds the torch;
The golden veiled Divinity,
Too closely pressed will scorch.
How grasp that thing, eternity!
Though trembling in its porch.

A parable this world of ours
Whose meaning none may read,
For time begets and time devours
The man and man-made creed,
While truth eternal, heav'nly powers,
From age to age succeed.

FANCIES

The fairies of my early years,
The fancies of to-day,
Are threaded with the tales of seers,
Who've caught perchance some ray
Of that which leads from night and fears
To everlasting day.

THE POET PLAYS.

All the gamut of emotions
He has felt and played upon,
Sorrows deep as deepest oceans,
Joys as light as tossed up foam;
Some with fleeting touch are gone,
Scarce caught by highest note of treble,
Others aimlessly may roam
To be ground like finest pebble
In the roar of heavy bass
Which absorbs with its embrace.

But he tries to catch each feeling
With soft notes of sweet accord,
Half concealing, half revealing,
Thoughts that linger, thoughts that go;
Seeking interval and chord,
That best express the meditation,
Where both thoughts and feelings glow
Fused in placid exaltation;
And the tune he seeks to play
Is neither sad nor over gay.

FULFILMENT.

I search for unaccomplished deeds

Among the days that once were mine;
And here and there I gather seeds,
That failed their part in life's design.

And now my days I feel are few,

And weak my will that once was strong,
And yet those seeds I'll watch anew
Until they blossom into song,

Until they blossom into deed;

For what is song which leads to nought?
A wilted stock, a broken reed,
But sprung from seed of useless thought!

THE WARP AND WOOF.

Let the warp and woof be flawless,
 Woven in the mental web,
Warp of thought and woof of action,
 Solace of the hours that ebb.
If the warp be loose or fraying
 Even though the woof pull taut,
Memory will search that weakness
 And the flaws, so lightly wrought,
May disturb those hours, that should be
 Ebbing like a gentle tide,
Whose calm waters, — clear, reflective —
 Will in wondrous depths subside!

BEYOND.

Always I have sought beyond,
Ever restless; seeking, seeking:
Then there's always still beyond!

But now their gentle movements show
I may be drifting soon beyond.—
Am I pleased or am I grieved
That I shall know what is beyond?

At last I feel relief and peace—
I may have found what is beyond!

TRAGEDY IS BUT A PHASE.

I try to write of tragic things, enlarge the
subject of my lays;

But I can only write of truth, and tragedy is
but a phase,

A passing phase, a cloud that dims the comedy
of human life;

For all is well whose end is well, and love is
stronger far than strife;

What strife destroys, strife cannot mend; but
love can mould to fairer form

By closing wounds with tender art, till beauty
springs where once was storm.

No tragedy the thing called death, it is but
change and life is change.

Why should we shudder when it comes as at
a phantom, cold and strange?

TRAGEDY IS BUT A PHASE

We face each day some change that shifts or
rocks the tenor of our ways;
We face this change with fortitude, why not
the change that death conveys?

No tragedy the thing called pain, disturber of
our work and rest;
If we but have the will to rise and meet it
with a laugh or jest,
Or meet it with a stern resolve to bear it as
our cross in life—
That cross may be some day our crown, when
we have conquered in the strife!

But sin is tragedy indeed, we cannot gloss, or
smile at it,
And feeble will is tragic too and life that
feeble wills transmit.
Of each perhaps is only asked, the good that's
born within his soul,
And he who's strong should help the weak
until they reach the final goal.

TRAGEDY IS BUT A PHASE

Though sin may crawl upon this earth, it never
climbs to realms above.

As finite as the earth is sin; but infinite —
protecting love!

So tragedy is but a phase, a cloud that dims,
nor start, nor end;

Why try to write of evil things? When all
our thoughts toward good should tend!

SORROW.

Sorrow, linger still beside me, stay for yet
another day!

Till I pause to gird myself, so face you in
your stubborn fray;

Go not swiftly thus, and leave me frail as
when you harshly came;

Stay, that I may rend your heart, then joy-
fully my strength proclaim!

GLORIA MUNDI.

The glory of this world is ours indeed,
While we have eyes to see its ruddy light,
And ears to catch the whispers of the night,
While we have storied books in which to read
Of thoughts, that link with thoughts, till men
succeed

In rising from the beast to such great height,
That God Himself must smile in calm delight
To gain rich harvest from his scattered seed.
And yet this glory all may pass away
When we have closed our eyes, have sunk in
sleep,

To wake, we know not when, we know not
where;

This destiny, for all we hold most dear!
But I have faith that when He comes to reap,
No worthy thought will He let fall astray!

THE DIVINE ESSENCE.

Transcendent Power that binds the Universe,
Whose attributes no human mind may grasp,
Whose Will permits, but seems not to coerce
The Destiny that each himself must clasp,
Who gives to each, perchance, a spark divine,
Both creature and Creator to combine!

L'AMOUR DE DIEU.

Genius winged its way above,
And poets made the gods of Greece.
In men's hearts came simple love,
And through that love was learned the Christ.

OUR FARMS.

Aphrodite! art thou jealous
Of the birds in gay attire?
That thou let'st thy sober sparrows
Chase sweet comers, who desire
Nesting quarters in our bushes —
Fair-plumed visions that inspire!

Chirping sparrows are most useful;
But we long for Psyche's charms.
Steal what's venom from thy workers—
Quarrelling and all that harms,
Let both diligence and beauty
Thrive together on our farms!

THE SPIRIT OF TO-DAY.

Youth came scrambling round the corner,
Heedless of restraining Age.

“Though she looks so wise, I scorn her!
Times have changed, now I’m the Sage!

I can understand new wonders,
I’m the Spirit of to-day!”

Age looked on and saw Youth’s blunders,
Once her own of yesterday.

Restless Youth, slow-moving Age,
Which is truly now the Sage?
Stir them round like pudding batter,
Now we’ve found what is the matter:
Each the complement of each,
Mingling thoughts, might learn and teach.

THE PRINCIPAL.

January 12th, 1919.

In service of the Greeks he loved
And of the Scot, his countryman,
He struggled to command himself,
To carry out a promised plan.

Before two thousand Greeks he spoke,
Espoused with eloquence their cause,
Dilating on their mighty past
Which gave us freedom and our laws.

To them we owe what now we are!
Shall we be deaf to their demand
To free them from the strangers' yoke?
For where dwells Greek should be Greek
land!

THE PRINCIPAL

And then he hastened to the church,
Where he had promised to preside
At Lauder's plea to reconstruct
A world reversed by German pride.

To build on rock and build to God
A better, simpler, truer life!
And he — who promised to preside —
Had ever sought to live that life.

THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

My little love has kind grey eyes,
My little love's a fairy;
For when she's near me worry flies;
My little love, my Mary!

I may be cross and out of sorts
While trying to write my sermon:
The war disturbs, the war distorts!
Should we forgive the German?

But Mary smiles, the little witch!
And finishes the sentence:
"When we do wrong, we need the switch,
Until we show repentance."

Perchance if all, who wield the cane,
Had kind grey eyes like Mary,
Then peace and joy might ever reign—
So wave your wand, my Mary!

THE DEVIL'S TOLL.

Upon the great bronze door of Charlemange's
church

I saw a mark, and wondered whence it came,
Then, in an ancient book, I read this tale:—

With burning zeal and loving care each stone
Was deftly placed, and so a Minster grew,
While Charlemagne watched, with smile or
frown, and called

For greater haste. From all the Provinces,
From Italy, from England, workmen trooped;
From Rome and from Ravenna marble blocks
And rounded columns and from strong Ver-
dun

Great stones were brought. From many near-
by parts,

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

From Maestricht and from other ancient
towns

Material was drawn by day and night,
And yet the towering Minster was but half
Complete, when Charlemagne once again was
called

To fight the pagan tribes of Saxony.

Now as he journeyed forth, the Emperor
Entrusted to his Councillors the task
He had so willingly imposed upon
Himself, and thus he spoke: "Ere my return
The Minster must be finished! Yours is now
This burden and how light to what is mine!"
Then to the working men he said: "Take heed
That all be done as though I still were here
To supervise, encourage, and command!"
So Charlemagne went, with all his court, to
join

His well-trained troops, and soon he thought
to quell

Those sinful Saxon hordes; by sword to teach
That Christ was Lord, not heathen deities.

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

But wearily the war dragged on and drained
The Empire of its gold, till those, who worked
Upon the Minster, would no longer work
For promises alone, and left the church
An idle ruin, where grass seeds might root
For all they cared! The Councillors, in sore
Distress, now wondered where to turn for
gold,

While writing Charlemagne fairy tales of how
Each week the work progressed! First one
and then

Another said: "The money must be found.
We cannot face the Emperor, should he
Return and see his Minster but a grass
Grown ruin. Better from the Devil's self
To borrow gold than suffer Charlemagne's
wrath."

Now whether Satan heard these words or news
Of them was brought to him we have no means
Of telling; but we've sometimes found when
men

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

Are in extremities, the Devil's not
Far off. One evening when the Council met
To gloomily discuss the Minster's plight
A handsome man in fine attire appeared
And, smiling, bowed with courtly grace, then
spoke
Most kindly: "Gentlemen, the whole town
knows
You suffer from a very old complaint
Whose cure is — well filled coffers. Now the
war
Has emptied yours, and money in these days
Is hard to find as honest Councillors.
But you, I'm sure, would never lie, and I
Am rich, while gold can buy what I require.
To do you pleasure is my will. Accept
From me your Minster's price!" The Coun-
cillors
Could scarce believe the offer was sincere;
But from their faces one might see that hope
Was chasing blank despair; as, with one voice,
They gasped: "The interest, how much? and
then

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

How long the lending?" "Interest!" replied
The stranger, "did not Aristotle preach
That interest was most improper? I
Am even more considerate. My gold
I freely give, nor ever ask again.

I do but stipulate, as my reward,
The soul, who first shall find its way beneath
The finished Minster's dome. Small recom-
pence

For such a gift! but 'tis my whim." These
words

Were scarcely uttered when, displaying great
Alarm, the Councillors slid off their seats
And crept, with nervous, trembling haste, be-
hind

The council board for who but Satan's self
Would traffic gold for human souls, they
thought.

Disdainfully the stranger looked at these
Wise Councillors who sought to fortify
Themselves behind the council board, then
spoke

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

With cool contempt. "I hardly had supposed
My presence would disturb you, Gentlemen.
I understood you wished to borrow gold
From me; but now that I appear in most
Complacent mood, you crawl like boys who
fear

The cane or dogs that crouch beneath the
lash.

What sort of Councillors are you! to shrink
From such a kindly Devil, well disposed
And so obliging! Surely you will not
Refuse the one condition which I make!
With half the sum I offer you I might
Obtain a dozen souls, at least! for I
Have learnt, through long experience, that
fish

Are soonest caught when money baits the
hook.

You reckon falsely too, forgetting all
The souls your church will save if you accept
My gold, and I but ask for one! You see,
Dear friends, I only wish to demonstrate
The Devil is not always black; he's most

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

Good natured when it pleases him, but I'll
No longer press the point, all argument
Is waste of words on men whose minds are set.
Unfinished and neglected churches suit
My nesting owls. Look for your gold else-
where,

You may gain better terms. I hold by what
I've said." The Councillors took courage from
This courteous address, whose logic proved
That one soul lost meant thousands that were
saved;

Nor interest to pay, nor principal
Returned! No men with sense could well
refuse

Such favourable terms. Again around
The council board with dignity they sat
And each in turn affixed his name to this
Auspicious deed, one single soul for so
Much gold, they chuckled at the thought. The
deed

Was sealed and, with low bows, delivered to
The stranger, who departed as he came,

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

No man knows how. The Councillors now
rubbed

Their eyes, they must have all been dreaming;
but

A faint sardonic laugh they heard and then,
From walls and ceiling, golden coins appeared
And fell, an avalanche of wealth, each coin
A golden florin, freshly stamped, and so
They fell until enough were heaped to fill
The empty coffers. How the Councillors
Rejoiced in the bargain they had made!
And yet they realized that secrecy
Was best, as each now swore a solemn oath
No word of these proceedings to divulge.

All Councillors, we fear, are not discreet
For some one must have whispered to his wife,
Who whispered to her dearest friend, and so—
Till whisperings became the market talk.
Again the Minster grew; but as it grew
The Councillors were ill at ease and felt
More troubled than before. The Devil had

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

Their bond and seal; now who would step
within
The church their contract to fulfill? Might
not
The people rightfully demand that one
Of them, who signed the deed, should pay the
price
As well? So worried days brought sleepless
nights
To these misguided men, who had approved
Thus thoughtlessly the Devil's subtleties.

Most bitterly they now repented (all
Who call on Satan must), and turned this time
To Mother Church to help them in their woe.
She did not fail; an aged monk, much learned
In legal lore, suggested that no word
Was used to qualify the soul. A wolf
Or bear's would answer; why a Christian's,
then?
The Councillors now breathed relief and
watched

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

With joy their Minster grow, until it soared,
A masterpiece, to justify their pride.

One night, when all was finished, stealthily
The Devil crept behind the great bronze door
That hung, invitingly, wide open; he
Awaited there, with greediness, his long
Expected prey. The Councillors kept watch
As well throughout that autumn night and by
Their side a caged she-wolf which snarled the
hours

Away. When morning dawned, with trem-
bling hands,

They gave the beast her liberty; but just
So much—the streets were lined—she dashed
within

The finished church. The Devil heard the
wild

In-rush, with lightning speed he struck the
wolf

And grasped her living soul — then ground
his teeth

And howled with rage to find his prey was but

THE DEVIL'S TOLL

A senseless beast. With imprecations foul
To hear, he fiercely slammed the great church
door
And left his mark upon the bronze.

The mark.

We see to-day!

A moral sad
I now must add
To strengthen this most weird of tales;
Who listens to the Devil's voice
Soon finds no reason to rejoice,
And all repentant sighs and wails
Will never wash the stain away
Of crooked paths and miry clay;
The sin may go, its mark prevails.
No perfect whole
The Devil's toll!

THE BUTTERFLIES.

Beside the Ranger's house, where we now
drive,

There flutters upward from a flowering
bush

A whirl of pearl-white butterflies that push
And jostle daintily, then dip and dive;
And in their midst a lordly one, all brown,

With jewelled wings that languidly unfold
As though perchance to say: "Behold! be-
hold!

'This swarm, with which I flutter up and down
Is not for me. Go find my proper mate!"

Three times upon our mountain drive we
pass

That spot where lightly float above the
grass

The pearly butterflies and one which fate
Has doomed, it seems, to dismal loneliness

Amid that happy, busy, drifting swarm;

Where all but it alone are uniform,
And none but me to pity its distress.

THE BUTTERFLIES

Such hazy, tranquil summer days! such wealth
Of bloom in neatly starred and circled beds
That dot the Ranger's lawn with flaming
reds

And vivid blues and yellows, where by stealth
No shadow creeps; but just the gloom that
hangs

Around my lonely butterfly — a gloom
That passes then to me. What sadder doom!
To live where all is lovely; but the pangs
Of longings unfulfilled. Poor butterfly!
That has so much and yet still grieves its
loss,

For play without a playmate is but dross--
An emptiness that nought can satisfy.

And thus I muse until we reach the bend,
Where one may see the polished stones that
mark

The dead, who rest beneath the sloping
park.

What longings once were theirs! and for what
end!

THE BUTTERFLIES

To live in vain, and die unsatisfied!

A mournful world if only one must crave,

Then hopelessly alone sink to his grave.

But what floats up? With wings outstretch-
ed in pride!

A message from the dead that comes to me,

This living sign of joy and hope fulfilled

Which upward flies as though some Master
willed

That I myself assist its destiny.

For straight to me the butterfly now heads,

Alights upon my lap with airy grace

And there stays perched upon a fold of lace,

A refuge from the breeze the filmy threads!

A great brown butterfly with jewelled wings!

The mate, which seemingly it was designed,

That I, through sympathy, should truly
find,

Serenely poised! New confidence it brings

That somehow, somewhere comfort ever waits

As rests this burnished butterfly! And now

THE BUTTERFLIES

We turn around the Mountain's eastern
brow,
Descending by the road that separates
The peaceful garden from the wind-blown
pines;
And near the honeysuckle bush uptwirl
The pearl-white butterflies that dip and
whirl
And one that darts away, and soon entwines
In happy play with our wee passenger.
Together two brown butterflies in glee
Now spiral up above the topmost tree!—
What gracious boon do simple joys confer.

COULEUR DE ROSE.

There's music in the sunshine
That glints upon the lawn,
There's colour in the bird's note
That hails the early dawn.

The music of the sunshine
Is throbbing in my heart!
The colour of the bird's note—
The rose that dreams impart!

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